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MONTANA

Working for you

"promoting the wise use of our natural resources"

CONSERVATION

DISTRICTS



PLEASE RETURN

MONTANA CONSERVATION DISTRICTS WORKING FOR YOU

Montanans share a strong interest in the wise management of the state's resources. Out of this interest has grown a commitment to conserve, protect, and develop Montana's soil and water resources.



Organized in response to the severe soil erosion of the 1930s, Montana's 59 conservation districts (CDs) provide a local source of assistance for land users and resource managers. Districts provide planning and technical assistance in urban sediment and erosion control and administration of the Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act. Districts have developed numerous programs to aid developers and homeowners in conservation practices.



Your county conservation district is a unit of state government, governed by a locally elected board of supervisors, who give their time and talents voluntarily. With a maximum of seven supervisors, five elected biennially and two urban supervisors appointed by city or town councils, the district board provides leadership on a broad range of conservation issues.

SOIL EROSION

Agriculture is the foundation of Montana's economy, and soils are the cornerstone. But soil is a fragile resource that is being lost to wind and water erosion at an alarming rate. Montana's conservation districts realize the urgent need to conserve this precious resource that provides our food, fiber, and shelter.



In Montana, soil or sediment is the pollutant most frequently found in lakes and streams. Major contributors of this sediment are erosion of soil during farming operations and earthmoving for urban development. Finding solutions to the problems of wind and water erosion, and surface and groundwater pollution, is a priority for the conservation districts. Districts administer federal, state,



and local funds for land treatment practices such as field terraces, grass waterways, water diversions, and erosion and flood control structures. During the last 50 years, conservation districts have performed invaluable work in protecting and enhancing Montana's most valuable asset—topsoil. But district work goes beyond soil loss to encompass other key areas of modern resource management.



WATER

Water pollution control is a natural extension of conservation districts' work on soil erosion. The main focus of this work is helping land users learn how to keep sediment, nutrients, and chemicals out of water.



the conservation districts administer the Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act. The act requires a person to obtain a permit before engaging in any activity that will modify a stream, or its bed or immediate banks. Activities such as irrigation diversions, streambank stabilization (riprap), equipment crossings, culverts, bridges, and dams require a 310 permit. The permit process provides the land user with helpful technical advice through an on-site consultation with representatives of the conservation district and the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

WATER QUALITY

Clean, good quality water is a commodity we have all taken for granted. To maintain the high quality of Montana's surface waters,





WATER RESERVATIONS

In 1978, in an effort to ensure an adequate supply of water for future rural and urban development, the Montana Board of Natural Resources and Conservation granted water reservations to municipalities and conservation districts in the Yellowstone River basin. The Yellowstone basin water reservation is a water right held by public entities and made available to qualified individuals.

The water reservation application process is currently under way in the Missouri and Little Missouri River basins.

Districts encourage land users and resource managers to apply for reserved water for new or supplemental irrigation projects.



WORKING ON TODAY'S RESOURCE PROBLEMS

Districts play an important role in their communities by serving as a recognized contact point for matters related to natural resources. The ultimate goal of conservation district work is to implement resource management plans geared to the needs of the community. Additional district programs also encompass many other related resource management issues such as:

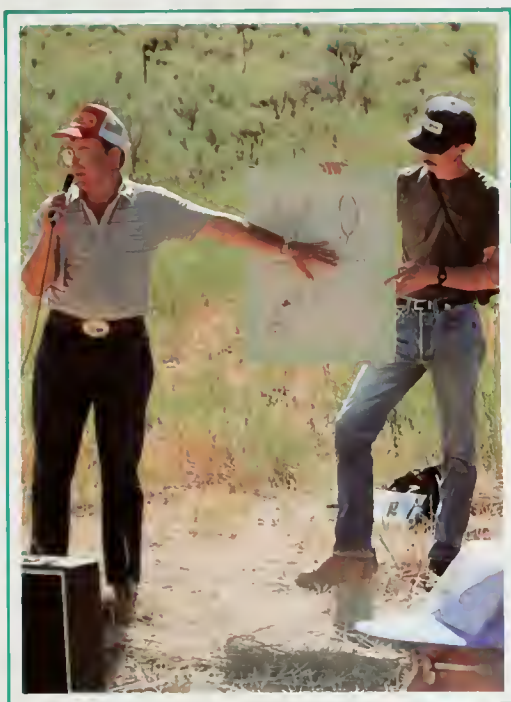
- Weed control
- Land use ordinances
- Stream inventories
- Groundwater assessments
- Habitat development and enhancement projects
- Tree planting for parks, shelterbelts, and windbreaks
- Revegetation of road cuts and burn areas
- Streambank rehabilitation projects
- Water reservations
- Technical assistance to landowners, city and county government, businesses, and industries
- Irrigation scheduling and wastewater management
- Sediment and flood control
- Farm plans
- Soil surveys
- Wetland restoration and preservation
- Administration of the Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act
- Rangeland improvement
- Oil and brine contamination assessments
- Saline seep reclamation



PUBLIC INFORMATION

Information about district programs is available through newsletters, brochures, workshops, and tours. Conservation districts also provide informational displays at county fairs and at other special events. Most conservation districts participate in the observance of National Soil and Water Stewardship Week by distributing packets of soil and water conservation materials to schools and churches each spring.

The best way to find out what your district has to offer is to make a visit to your district office, or call for the date and time of the next board of supervisors meeting and plan to attend.



TEACHER AND STUDENT EDUCATION

Conservation districts initiate and support education programs for teachers and students. Teachers can receive scholarships for environmental education courses or attend environmental workshops sponsored by CDs. Teachers can receive help from district staff including classroom speakers and materials, financial or technical support for the development of outdoor-environmental classrooms, and environmental resource materials.

Montana's youth benefit from district programs such as speech contests, Range Days, Youth Range Camp, and the Natural Resources Youth Camp. Many conservation districts provide scholarships to the camps, and other natural resource youth activities.

SPECIAL INFORMATION SERVICES

Conservation districts also provide specialized information on conservation tillage, irrigation management, chemical application, grassland seeding, and rangeland and riparian management. They also sponsor demonstrations, workshops, and tours.

DISTRICT FUNDING

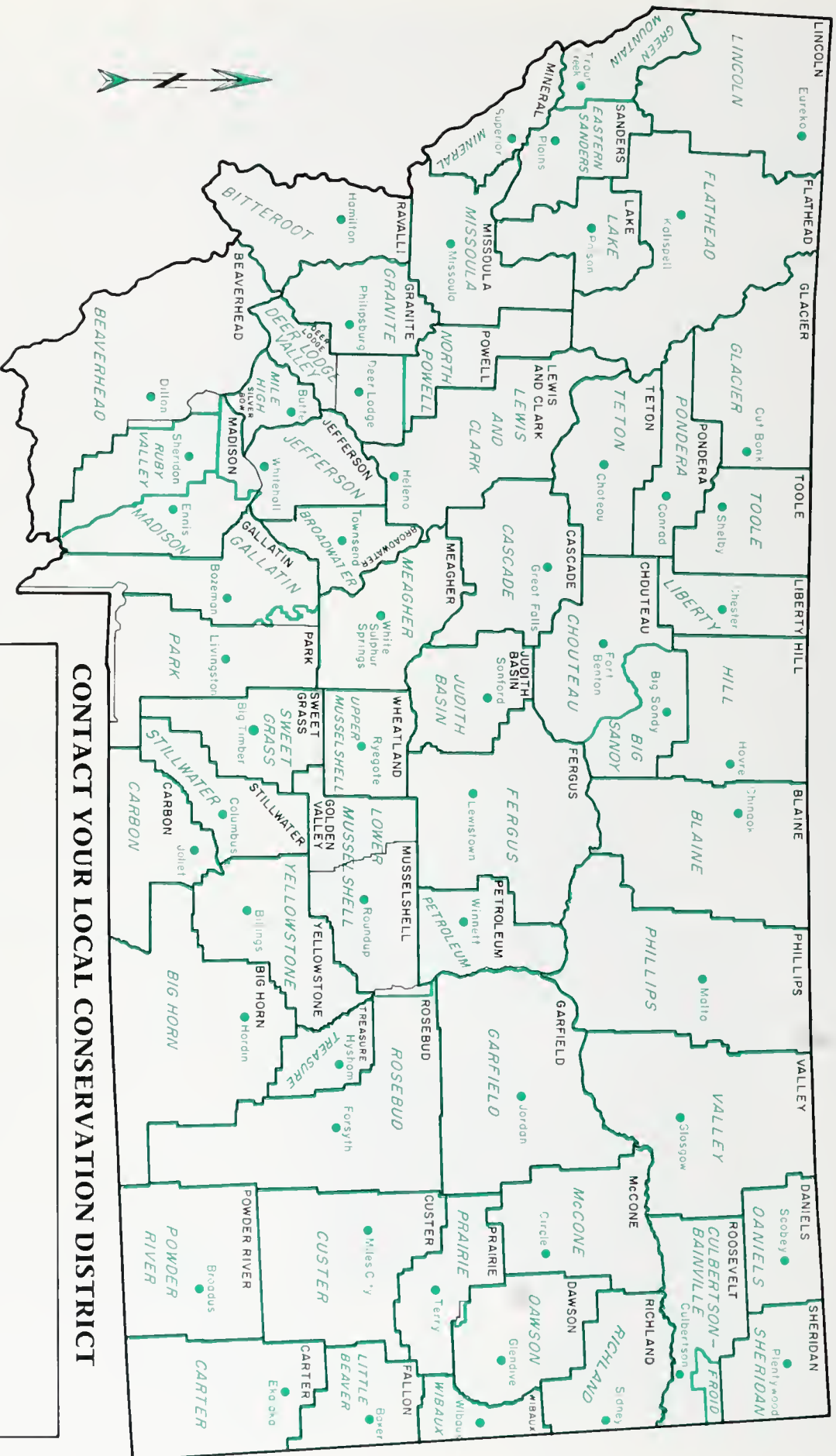
Direct funding for conservation districts comes from a variety of sources, including a one and one-half mill county tax on real property, grants, and special projects. Federal assistance is provided through the hiring and assigning of technical experts to each district. Private donations and contributions are also made by those individuals, businesses, and organizations committed to a cleaner environment.

Districts also apply for and administer special project grants or help land users find project grants and loans.

**For More Information On
Your Local Conservation
District**

Contact:

MONTANA CONSERVATION DISTRICTS



CONTACT YOUR LOCAL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

- North Powell Conservation District and Deer Lodge Conservation District meet in Deer Lodge.
- Mile High Conservation District meets in Butte and receives mail in Whitehall.